Il Gentiluomo e il Randagio

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by 305unreal

Summary

Pampered teenager Hannibal's comfortable life slips away once his parents have another baby. When, after some tense circumstances, Hannibal finds himself on the loose and out on the street, he is befriended and protected by the tough stray kid Will. A romance begins to blossom between the two boys, but their many differences, along with more drama at Hannibal's household, threaten to keep them apart.

Christmas Eve, 1909

A light snow falls as the grand carriage pulls up the winding drive. Within its plush interior, Simonetta Lecter's elegant figure is barely discernible in the shadows, obscured in a pile of embroidered cushions and blankets. Her golden curls spill artlessly across the seat as she breathes shallowly through another contraction. Outside, Hannibal VII paces anxiously, puffing on his pipe to steady his nerves. When the carriage finally arrives, he wrenches the door open with careless haste.

"My darling," he speaks gently, brushing Simonetta's hair from her flushed face. "We're home now. The doctor is waiting."

Ten years later... the sleepy town of Colmar, France bustles with Yuletide cheer. The Lecters sip mulled wine in their fine parlor before the fire as young Hannibal plays nearby. It's hardly the perfect Christmas Eve for the babe's birthday, but Simonetta smiles through her exhaustion, grateful to have her son near.

Across town, a dirty seven-year-old orphan named Will sits huddled in a crowded Juvenile hall, wishing for nothing more than a family to call his own. As the other children celebrate with stolen panettone and limited carols, a pair approaches Will's lonely corner.

"I'm Beverly," a girl with dark curls and a knowing smile tells him.

Her companion adds, "Name's Z. You play bocce?"

Despite their circumstances, Will knows he's found his first friends on what could be a long journey in Italy.

Spring, 1927

Panting heavily, Will Graham darts down the narrow streets of Colmar, the local truant officer's angry shouts fading behind him. In his desperate flight, he stumbles upon one of the grandest estates in town - the home of young Hannibal Lecter. Peering through the iron gates,

Will overhears Hannibal in the garden, distress evident in his tone as he confides in neighbors Alana and Donald.

"Mother has scarcely left her bedchamber these past moons. Father spends all hours with the doctor - what changes will this new baby bring?"

Will steps forward, intruding on the private conversation, to warn the older boy gravely. "When a baby moves in, a teenager moves out."

Alana is quick to wave off his words, and Will raises his arms in surrender. He slips away, stealing some nice wears from a nearby clothesline to further hide from Officer Chilton. Although Will has left, Alana and Donald as well, the street kid's words linger with Hannibal, worry gnawing at him through Simonetta's final weeks of pregnancy.

20 Jun 1927

On a sweltering Summer Solstice Eve, little Mischa Lecter enters the world. Hannibal falls instantly for his cherubic sister, cooing a lullaby in their shared native Lithuanian as she sleeps peacefully in his arms. At last, his fears are put to rest. In the weeks after Mischa's birth, Hannibal quite dotes on his new sister. Though just an infant, he feels a fierce protectiveness over her. Each night as their parents ready for sleep, Hannibal asks to hold Mischa just a little while longer, tenderly cradling her small form and humming soft melodies. Mischa is intensely drawn to the sound of Hannibal's voice. Even when fussy, she quiets at the gentle rumble of his native songs. Hannibal takes great joy in discovering all the little ways to soothe her -- a gentle rock, a brush of his fingers against her soft cheek. Mischa responds to his touch with endearing coos and grasps of her tiny hands. As she grows, Hannibal takes every opportunity to engage her. He lays beside her on a blanket, pointing out colorful toys and mobile shapes dangling above. Mischa watches him with wide, curious eyes, transfixed by her brother's animated storytelling. On quiet evenings, the two are found nestled close by the fire, Hannibal whispering fairytales just for her. It's a bond unlike any other Hannibal has known. In caring for delicate Mischa, he finds purpose and joy.

A few months pass when Hannibal's parents depart for a brief trip. Entrusting the house to Hannibal's dreadful Aunt Sarah, she arrives with her mischievous twin sons in tow. Strict and severe, she forbids Hannibal from seeing Mischa, insisting "babies and teenagers don't mix." Left unattended, the ten-year-olds see an opportunity to wreak havoc and shift the blame onto Hannibal. They destroy the house, breaking treasured belongings and causing chaos at every turn. When Aunt Sarah returns to the scene of the destruction, she finds Hannibal amidst the wreckage, his face a mask of innocence. Mason and Garrett, skilled in the art of

manipulation, twist the truth, accusing Hannibal of injuring them and orchestrating the destruction. Already harboring a deep-seated prejudice against Hannibal, Sarah believes the fabricated tale without question. Consumed by anger and disappointment, she locks Hannibal away in the basement, punishing him for crimes he did not commit.

In the dimly lit confines of the basement, Hannibal's spirit remains unbroken. Determination courses through his veins as he vows to protect Mischa, even from the depths of his confinement. He knows that he needs to devise a plan to escape and expose the truth, for the sake of his sister and his sanity. As the darkness envelops him, Hannibal's mind begins to weave a web of strategy, fueled by his love for Mischa and his unwavering resolve to reclaim their freedom. Hannibal paces like a caged animal in the damp basement, the worry for Mischa gnawing at him. When, at last, night falls, he spies a tiny high window and knows he must risk escape. Clambering up precariously in the dark, Hannibal pushes through the narrow opening with a grunt. No sooner has he tumbled onto the street than three hulking figures emerge from the shadows.

"Look boys, fresh meat," sneers their leader.

They close in, Hannibal feeling small, when Will Graham is suddenly among them. With feline ferocity, Will launches atop the biggest brute, kicking and punching to defend Hannibal. After a hard-fought scuffle, the gang disperses, limping into alleys nursing wounds.

"Thank you, friend," Hannibal breathes.

Will gives him a roguish grin. "Come, let me show you how a free spirit lives."

Through backroads and hidden paths, Will leads Hannibal on an adventure - introducing him to the underside of Colmar away from rules and expectations. Beneath the silvery moonlight, Will leads Hannibal down winding back alleys with mischievous delight.

"This way," he beckons, ducking under clotheslines dripping with linens.

They emerge through a hidden courtyard dotted with wildflowers, the towering walls shutting out the outside world. "The innkeepers leave out scraps some nights if you're quick," Will whispers as if sharing a sacred secret.

Weaving through wrought iron gates overgrown with vine, they come upon a towering willow drooping its veil into a slow moving creek. "The other kids and I like to fish for lamprey here," Will explains as they pause to skip stones across the inky surface.

Deeper into the night they roam, with Will introducing Hannibal to all his well-worn haunts. An abandoned barn sheltering a scrap wood fort. A rambling garden gone to seed, heavy with overripe figs and berries just begging to be picked. At one point, as the sunset stains the sky with rosy hues, Will brings Hannibal through wrought iron gates into the piazza where Bella's Italian Restaurant bustles. The kind chef greets Will with a maternal hug before seating the boys outside in the side cafe.

"Mangia, mangia!" she encourages, piling their plates high with steaming spaghetti and garlic bread.

Hannibal savors each bite of the perfectively balanced meal, understanding Will's fondness for this place. Over shared plates and cups of wine in the twinkling cafe lights, the boys build an easy rapport. As the others chatter around them, Hannibal listens intently to Will recounting tales of street skirmishes and close calls with rising intrigue.

"You move like you were born in shadows, my friend. Such agility and cunning would serve well in other pursuits," Hannibal sighs admiringly.

Will ducks his chin, a faint blush rising. "And you, with your silver tongue and scholar's mind - have you considered life beyond these gates you were born within?"

Hannibal speaks wistfully, "Alas, duty demands I serve the path laid before me. But on nights like this, following your lead, all things seem possible."

Their eyes meet across the flickering candle, lingering with unspoken feelings. Will is the first to look away, biting back a grin.

"You know, for a posh fellow, your company's not entirely terrible."

Hannibal's laugh is rich and warm. "And you, dear stray, have shown me glimpses of joy I'd never imagined. A wonder it took till now to find you."

When their fingers brush while reaching for bread, a spark passes between them. Hannibal is fascinated by Will's street wisdom, while Will is drawn to Hannibal's refined intellect and wit. Their discussion soon wanders from philosophy to forbidden futures, peppered with flirtatious smiles.

Full and content, they thank the proprietors and stroll the quieting parks arm in arm under the velvet sky. By the time dawn's fingers stretch across the sky, Hannibal has glimpsed a whole new realm in the nooks and crannies of his normally staid town. A place where curiosity and adventure, not rules, reign supreme. Returning to Bella's with the clink of closing kitchens, she shows them to a cozy back room for the night. As they drift off beneath the stars glowing through cracked panes, Hannibal feels the stirring of something more in his heart for this dear friend who has turned his world delightfully upside down. A night he'll long remember.

The next morning, Will is loathe to part from Hannibal as they linger in the piazza.

"Come live on the streets with me - no stuffy rules or adults to please. We'll run wild and free!" he tempts with a roguish smirk.

As tempted as he is by Will's carefree spirit, Hannibal knows he needs to be elsewhere. "My place is with Mischa, to protect her from harm. But I shan't forget this time we've shared, mio caro randagio - the best of adventures."

Will sighs softly, accepting the answer. As they walk hand in hand back toward the manor, a haughty call of "Truant! Stop right there!" rings out. Never one to back down from a fight, Will instantly taunts the pompous Officer Chilton into a frenzied chase. But amid the scuffle, only Hannibal is caught in Chilton's meaty grasp and hauled away, giving him no chance to explain as the paddy wagon doors slam shut. Left alone under different pretenses, Will's heart is heavy with the loss of his most intriguing companion yet. Luckily, Will knows many people on the streets - surely somewhere, an ally can be found to help poor Hannibal escape

Juvie's cruel grasp. The Juvenile Hall is cold, cramped, and unforgiving. Hannibal tosses fitfully, missing Mischa's sweet coos and Will's carefree company. When dawn's pale light finally seeps through grimy windows, he rises exhausted.

Approaching the nearest guard in the recreation room, Hannibal asks, "Have there been any phone calls from my friend? Will Graham?"

The guard merely grunts and directs him to a table where a lively group chatters, their easy rapport belying harsh circumstances. When the guard turns away, one of the girls turns her head sharply at Hannibal.

"Another stray Will picked up, huh? I'm Bev. Me and Will go way back to our days on the Brooklyn streets." Her face softens while her eyes remain hard with protectiveness. "He's like family to me."

Next to her, a teen boy gives him a charming yet roguish grin. "I'm Jimmy. Got sent here last month for petty theft, but my spirit ain't so petty."

Next to him, the boy is more reserved. "Folks from the orphanage know me as Z. I'm the muscle of this outfit." His chiseled arms hint at his role. He eyes Hannibal warily, clearly protective of Will as well.

"Charmed, I'm sure," the next girl assesses Hannibal coolly. "Don't get any ideas - my heart's fully mended since my time with Will."

"Don't underestimate Georgia," the enigmatic beauty further down the table warns him, providing a name as power radiates. "I'm Margot, and my family owns half this town. Don't cross me and we'll get along fine."

Lastly, the boy seated at Hannibal's other side flashes him a devastating smile. "Elliot Buddish at your service, darling. I do hope you fare better than I with our elusive stray."

Hannibal nods to each, warmth blossoming as he learns more of Will’s intriguing past. He hopes to earn their trust, and perhaps join their misfit family in time.

Georgia analyzes him carefully. "So, are you sweet on our stray?"

Before Hannibal can reply, Bev and Elliot have him cornered, the others hovering dangerously. "Will's had his heart broken before. You'd best treat him right, posh boy, or answer to us."

Hannibal meets their gazes with calm dignity. "Will showed me joy I've never known. I mean only to walk by his side if he'll have me, for as long as Fates allow."

After a few beats, his integrity seems to win over the pack for now, as they move on to other topics. That evening, Aunt Sarah arrives at the Juvenile Hall like a stormcloud, swooping in to claim Hannibal with sharp eyes and sharper talons. In the shuffle, he feels Beverly discreetly press something into his palm with a wink - "For your stray."

Once home, Sarah throws Hannibal into the musty garage, the clang of locks echoing his caged soul. She rages at him for running away, insisting that the punishment fits the crime. Once she finally calms enough for Hannibal to get a word in.

"Aunt Sarah, I understand your frustrations but fear grows for Mischa's safety in these stresses. Let me take her in hand, with my companions' aid, til parents' return."

She erupts in venomous rage, yet he remains calm as still waters. Exhausted by his composure, she eventually withdraws, leaving Hannibal to plan their liberation under starry guard. Through cracks in wood, he spots Alana's concerned face. The younger teenager pleads for him to stay at her house while his parents are still away - but Hannibal knows he needs to stay here for Mischa. Alana tries to point out that he can't do much from the detached garage, but his resolve remains resolute. With his aunt in the house and Alana back at her home, Hannibal surveys his newest prison, searching for any flaw to exploit. Near the back, he spies a modest window, its pane just possibly permitting egress if the angle proves right. Stacking shelves and boxes securely seems to be the best-laid plan. Yet, as he works, the rickety constructs collapse under his weight. Hannibal frowns, reconsidering his strategy. Force wouldn't serve well here; he must apply cunning instead. Fingers absently roll the gift from Beverly, a seed of hope taking root.

As darkness descends, Hannibal grows frantic and useless. Through the dingy window, movement above catches his eye: an intruder scaling the wall with ill intent. Hannibal cries out, but no one comes to the rescue. Down the pavement, Will walks to the Lecter residence with an apology on his lips when he hears Hannibal's outright shouts. He bursts into a run, following the screams to a crack in the garage. Hannibal's relief is palpable in his voice as Will picks the lock.

"Will, upstairs! An intruder!"

With likewise skills, Will breaks into the large house, and the boys bolt upstairs. A nightmare unfolds in Mischa's nursery. The crib is unbalanced, and a strange man dressed in black from head to toe scavenges the room for valuables. Hannibal scoops his sister close with a mother's fury while Will launches his lither form with all the ferocity of a cornered stray at the intruder. Fists and feet fly in a flurry, their grunts and snarls echoing vilely off nursery walls. Hannibal clutches Mischa tight, her wails wrenching at his heart as he watches helplessly. But oh, how Will moves - with the stealth and reflexes of an alley cat. Each dodge and blow land with precision honed from a life navigating dangers. The intruder is bigger, but Will is quicker. A well-placed kick sends the brute reeling, only to crash into an armoire with a sickening crunch. Still, he struggles on, lashing out with desperate strength. It takes all of Will's guile and grit to finally overpower the villain. A flying kick connected squarely brings the curtain rod and fabric tumbling down in a heavy cascade. At last, the intruder stills, leaving Will spent and bleeding on the littered floor. Hannibal gasps as Will clutches his side, crimson flowing between his fingers.

Sarah and Mason arrive languidly but, when she sees the crib overturned and Mischa wailing, her accusing glare falls upon the bleeding boy at Hannibal's feet.

"You've harmed the babe!" she shrieks, thoughtless to reason in her distress.

Hannibal tries desperately to explain as she rips Mischa from his arms. But dear Will's bruised form speaks enough accusations in her crazed state. Roughly, they're hauled downstairs while she calls for authorities with murder in her voice. Only the return of Hannibal and Mischa's parents, Count Hannibal VII and Countess Simonetta, prevent further injustice on this woeful night. Hannibal VII and Simonetta survey the wild scene with seasoned eyes, taking in every damning sign with care. Hannibal VII stays downstairs with Will, applying pressure to the wound, while Hannibal leads his mother into the nursery.

Though clearly distressed, Hannibal recounts the evening's terrors with poised composure. Lying beneath the curtain's ruin lays the truth in vile relief.

All charges are dropped at the sight, and the Lecter family physician is urgently dialed up for a house call regarding young Will. "We have been attacked and young William gravely injured protecting my children - your care is required with all haste."

Mischa is deposited into Hannibal's awaiting arms, the teenager quick to soothe her tears as he sits beside Will, providing a shoulder to lean on. Still weak from his ordeal, when the police come, Will leans heavily on Hannibal as he aids in the report. Between them, the full story emerges - of Hannibal's wrongful imprisonment, the intruder scaling above, and Will's brave intervention.

As Doctor Fell tends to Will with motherly care, sadness is etched in her noble features. She hides it well, putting on a calm facade for the shaken boys. Dispassionately, Count Hannibal Lecter VII ensures that the intruder will face justice's full weight for disturbing their peace. When the police arrive at last, a collective sigh brushes the room. Careful explanations are given once more, allaying fears as wounds are dressed and potions administered. Soon promise of recovery shines from Will's weary eyes, easing anguished hearts all around. The worst of the night now lays behind, banished by dawning light and the presence of protectors most dear.

Christmas Day, 1928

The winter air is still and bright as loved ones gather for Will and Hannibal's wedding this morning. Within the cozy chapel, Hannibal waits resplendent - his journey from loneliness complete at last. As the doors swing wide, all eyes turn to behold Will walking down the aisle on Beverly's loving arm. His radiance eclipses even the sun on snow, stealing every breath as their gazes meet with beams of pure delight. When vows are spoken and the kiss is sealed 'mid cheers, the celebration truly begins! Laughter rings through halls bedecked with holly as dear friends embrace the newlyweds. Alana presses champagne into eager hands, toasting their forever. Even the gruff delinquents smile openly at last. As for Mischa, now grown into a rosebud-year-old beauty on Donald's arm, what joy shines on her sweet face to see her brother truly blessed.

In the shadowed nook after the revels, Hannibal passes Will a familiar rolled gift.

"Come away, my stray, the day is afoursot once more!"

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